

Introducing Christian Theology

Teacher's book April 2020 (test version)

T. Pandit

Instructions to the teacher

The role of the teacher

- Don't lecture more than absolutely necessary!
- Allow the students to share their thoughts and their understanding.
- Give the students time to study the Bible references, to find key theological concepts from the references, and to present their findings.
- Ensure that each student participates actively in his/her group. No individual student must be allowed to dominate.
- Also ensure that each student is treated with respect. Don't allow bullying and silly jokes.
- Don't force the students to agree with your own conclusions. Remember that even great theologians sometimes disagree on doctrinal issues.

The students work in groups

There should be 3-4 persons in a group. Each group must have both bright and average students. Each group must use two Kannada Bible translations (for example **satyavEdavu** and **pavitra grantha**).

Outline of a study

1. Introduction and brainstorming: The teacher introduces the topic of the study very briefly and ends with a couple of questions. The students (in groups) freely discuss and try to answer the questions without looking in their Bibles and without writing anything down. The teacher makes sure that the groups have discussed the questions sufficiently, before moving on. No need for any detailed feedback!

2. Bible references: The teacher must allow plenty of time for the students to go through the Bible references. In their groups, they read the references together in two Kannada Bible translations and decide **together** what these references say about the topic. They also note down key words next to the Bible reference.

The **arrangement of the Bible references** that the students have in their handouts is different from what the teacher has in this booklet. The **teacher's** list follows the order of the books in the Bible (so that you can find a reference quickly; in most cases I have also included a brief summary of the text referred to). The **students'** list follows the order in which the references come in the **Conclusions** section of the study (in order to help the students find a theological structure through the references). This arrangement should also save time for the teacher who decides to

accept my structure of the topic (see the following point). Don't neglect to **check the students' handout** when you prepare your lesson!

3. Conclusions: The teacher and the students together work out a list of the "theology" of the topic. Focus on important matters and avoid speculation. To help the teacher, I have included my own conclusions for each study as an example. But it can, of course, be done differently. Ensure that the students are actively involved in the process!

4. Reflections: The students should be given opportunity to reflect on what they have studied. This is best done individually or in small groups, followed by a time of sharing in the whole class. The questions at the end of each study can be used for this.

Statements of faith

The last unit of this booklet is about statements of faith (Christian creeds). It is primarily meant as a resource for the teacher, so it has not been included in the students' handout. Perhaps it is enough for your students if you go through the first two sections and let the students watch (or listen to) the two Kannada versions of the Apostles' Creed that can be found on **youtube**. In addition, you may want to read the list of "16 fundamental truths" from the Assemblies of God to your students and ask them this question: "Why do you think that not all these "16 truths" have been covered in this booklet?" The answer to the question is that some of these truths are not considered "basic truths" (or even "truths" at all) by many Bible-believing Christians. This booklet is limited to what the author thinks are the most central truths of Christian theology, truths that can be accepted by Christian believers from different denominational backgrounds.

If there is time, your students may find it useful to make an attempt at one of the two **assignments**.

[Go to Table of contents](#)

The Triune God

Study 1: God revealed

Introduction and brainstorming

Introduction (teacher)

Paul writes that God dwells in unapproachable light and that no man has ever seen him or can see him (1 Timothy 6:16). In John 1:18 we read that no one except Jesus has ever seen God. In Isaiah we find that God is different from man, so man can never fully understand him (Isaiah 55:8–9). So here are three questions for you to discuss in your groups:

- How is it possible for us to find information about God?
- Where can we find God?
- How can we get to know God?

Brainstorming (students in groups)

Students discuss these questions freely without taking down notes. No need for any detailed feedback!

Bible references

In your groups, read the handout Bible references in two different translations and decide together what each reference tells us about getting to know God. Briefly note down your conclusions next to each reference, but avoid copying the whole Bible text. [Below I have included notes. They are for the teacher, not for the students!] [Note that the order in the students' list of references differs from yours!]

General revelation:

- Psalm 19:1 (God's wonderful creation reveals something about God)
- Isaiah 55:8–9 (God is different from man. Man can never fully understand God)
- Acts 14:17 (God's daily provisions testify to his concern for mankind)
- Acts 17:26 (God's control over the nations reveals his power)
- Romans 1:20–23 (God's created world reveals his eternal power and his divine nature. Man's thoughts and speculations will not lead to God. Idols do not represent God)
- Galatians 4:8 (The so called gods of the nations do not represent God at all)

- 1 Corinthians 1:21 (Man cannot get to know God through human wisdom)
- 1 Thessalonians 1:9 (God does not reveal himself through idols)

Special revelation:

- Exodus 19:5–6 (Israel are God's covenant people, chosen to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation)
- Exodus 24:7 (God made a covenant with Israel and they promised to be obedient to it)
- Deuteronomy 6:4 ("The Lord our God, the Lord is one" – Israel's statement of faith!)
- Deuteronomy 7:6–8 (Israel are God's chosen people, a people loved by God)
- Isaiah 63: 15–16 (God is the merciful Father to his people, and their Redeemer)
- Matthew 6:9 (God is our Father in heaven)
- Luke 22:20 (Jesus made a new covenant with his disciples)
- John 1:1, 14, 18 (Jesus is God's eternal Word. He was with God from the beginning. He is God. He is God made flesh, so he is God's face in this world)
- John 15:16 (The disciples are chosen by Jesus)
- Acts 5:3–4 (Ananias lied to God when he lied to the Holy Spirit)
- Romans 14:24–25 (The mystery of God's salvation plan through Jesus Christ was hidden from God's people of the Old Covenant)
- 2 Corinthians 3:6 (Christian believers are the servants of the new covenant)
- 1 Peter 2:9–10 (Christian believers are God's chosen people who have received God's mercy. They are a holy nation and a royal priesthood, called to serve him)

Conclusions

1. We cannot know God unless he reveals himself to us. Our knowledge of God is dependent on his revelation (1 Timothy 6:16; Isaiah 55:8–9). So we must not think that we can fully understand God and his ways.
2. God does not reveal himself to us through the so called gods of the nations or through idols (Galatians 4:8; Romans 1:23). So we must never backslide into idol worship when we face problems and difficulties.
3. We cannot get to know God through our own human thoughts, meditations, and philosophies (1 Corinthians 1:21; Romans 1:21). So we must not think

that we can find God in the darkness of our own hearts. Nor can we find him through intellectual speculations.

4. We get glimpses of God and his ways as we study his created world, and as we marvel at his concern for his creation, and as we see his hand at work in the lives of people and nations (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20; Acts 14:17).
5. The four points above show in a **general way** how God reveals – and doesn't reveal – himself to us. The following points show how God reveals himself to us in more **specific ways**. God does this **through his word, the Bible**.
6. Special revelation is particular in the sense that it is made **to God's people**, Israel in the Old Testament, Christian believers (the church) in the New Testament (Deuteronomy 7:6–8; Exodus 19:5–6; John 15:16; 1 Peter 2:9–10). In the Old Testament we get to know the people of the Old Covenant (Exodus 24:7). In the New Testament we get to know the people of the New Covenant (Luke 22:20; 2 Corinthians 3:6).
7. Special revelation is **progressive** in the sense that more and more about God and his ways is revealed to us as we watch the unfolding of the biblical story. One example of this is clear from the references in the previous point: God's chosen people of the Old Testament (Israel of the Old Covenant) are expanded to God's chosen people of the New Testament (the church, Israel of the New Covenant, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, Romans 3:29; Galatians 3:28). Another example of this is our understanding of God: "The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4) is expanded into our understanding of God as "three in one":
 - a. God the Father is our Covenant Lord (Isaiah 63: 15–16; Matthew 6:9)
 - b. God the Son is the incarnated Word, God in human flesh – our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth. (John 1:1, 14, 18). The truth about God's salvation plan through Jesus Christ was previously a hidden mystery (Romans 14:24–25).
 - c. God the Holy Spirit is God present in the life of the Christian believer and in the life of the Christian Church (Acts 5:3–4).

We will study more about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit later in this booklet.

Reflections

1. Idol worship is common in many parts of the world. Why is it wrong for Christian believers to worship idols? And how can we counsel family and friends who worship idols?

2. It is common for spiritual people to search for God through lofty philosophical speculation or through deep meditation. What should be our response as Christian believers to this kind of religious activities? And how can we counsel family and friends who try to get to know God by these methods?
3. God's revelation in the Bible is progressive. What does this mean? Give some examples of "progressive revelation" apart from the two (the people of God and the understanding of God) that I mentioned under **Conclusions** above.

[Here are some examples for the teacher to refer to, if you want:

- Life after death: In the Old Testament human life is depicted as ending with death followed by a shadowy continuation in the grave. In the New Testament we find that there will be a resurrection of the body followed by judgment and eternal life or eternal death (Hebrews 6:2).
- The Spirit of God: In the Old Testament, the Spirit is described more like an impersonal force, the power of God coming upon a person to perform a certain task. In the New Testament, we see how the Holy Spirit becomes personal, a "he" not an "it."
- The temple of God: King Solomon built a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem to replace the portable tent from the wilderness wanderings. This was where the Lord was present in a special way. In the New Testament, Paul calls the church the temple of God. This is where God's Spirit lives (1 Corinthians 3:16): But also the body of a believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- Kingdom: God promised David and his descendants the throne of Israel forever (1 Chronicles 28:2–8). David assumed that this would be a geographical kingdom. In the Gospels we see that Jesus is the promised king in the family line of David and that his kingdom, the Kingdom of God, goes far beyond a geographical kingdom. Jesus even says that his kingdom can be seen only by those who are born again (John 3:3) and that his kingdom is not of this world but from another place (John 18:36).
- The Messiah: David realized that the promised king on his throne would be a mighty ruler. But later Isaiah revealed that the Messiah would also be the suffering servant of the Lord (Isaiah 53:3–5). And in the New Testament we are told that this person is Jesus, who is not only King of kings (Revelation 17:14) but also God's suffering servant (Acts 3:13) and the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).
- Circumcision: In the Old Testament circumcision was a physical procedure from the time of Abraham (Genesis 17:10). In Colossians

(2:11–13), Paul teaches that there is also a spiritual circumcision in Christ.]

[Go to Table of contents](#)

Study 2: How great is our God!

Introduction and brainstorming

Introduction (teacher)

Christian understanding of God is based on the texts found in the Old Testament and the New Testament of our Bible. Here we find God and his character described. Here we see how God interacts with his created world. Here we learn how God deals with people and nations. After careful study of these texts we can summarize our understanding of God. Discuss this question in your groups:

- What is your understanding of God at this point in your Christian life?

Brainstorming (students in groups)

Students discuss this question freely without taking down notes. No need for any detailed feedback!

Bible references

In your groups, read the handout Bible references in two different translations and decide together what each reference tells us about how to understand God. Briefly note down your conclusions next to each reference, but avoid copying the whole Bible text. [Below I have included my own notes. They are for the teacher, not for the students!] [Note that the order in the students' list of references differs from yours!]

- Exodus 3:13–14 (God calls himself “I am who I am”)
- 1 Kings 8:27 (Kings Solomon prays: Behold, the heavens, even the heavens of heavens, cannot contain you.)
- Psalm 9:7 (The Lord reigns forever)
- Psalm 42:2 (The living God)
- Psalm 117:2 (The faithfulness of the Lord endures forever)
- Psalm 139:8 (David realized that God is everywhere)
- Isaiah 43:15 (God calls himself “your Lord” and “your Holy One” and “Israel’s Creator” and “your King”)
- Isaiah 44:6 (The Lord says that he is the first and the last)
- Jeremiah 10:10 (The living God)
- Jeremiah 23:24 (God says that nobody can hide from him. He fills heaven and earth)

- Ezekiel 33:30 (God says that he will judge the people of Israel)
- Ezekiel 34:11–12 (God says that he will search for and look after his sheep)
- Malachi 1:6 (God describes himself as “father” and “master”)
- Malachi 3:6 (The Lord does not change)
- John 4:24 (God is spirit)
- 2 Corinthians 3:3 (The Spirit of the living God)
- Colossians 1:15 (Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God)
- 1 Timothy 1:17 (The only God is eternal King, immortal and invisible)
- 1 Timothy 6:15–16 (God is the blessed and only King of kings, who alone has immortality. He lives in unapproachable light. No one has ever seen him or can see him)
- James 1:17 (There is no variation or change with God the Father of lights)
- Revelation 1:8 (The Lord God is the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come)

Conclusions

1. This is **how God identifies himself**:
 - a. He is a **living** God. This does not mean that “life is god”, but that God has life in himself and that he is the only one who can bring life and renew life. It also means that God opposes the worship of idols; they are dead and cannot speak nor hear nor walk nor help. Psalm 42:2; Jeremiah 10:10; 2 Corinthians 3:3.
 - b. He is a **personal** God. He uses a personal name (*Yahweh*, usually translated as “the Lord”) and personal titles (king, judge, shepherd, father, and many more) to describe himself. He also enters into personal relationships with people. Exodus 3:13–14; Isaiah 43:15; Ezekiel 33:30; Ezekiel 34:11–12; Malachi 1:6.
 - c. God is **spirit**. This means that he does not have a material body and that he cannot be seen (John 4:24; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 6:15–16). When the Bible speaks about God’s eyes, ears, feet, finger, hand, or that God rides on the clouds, it uses a figure of speech called anthropomorphism. Many other expressions are also used about God, for example rock, fortress, shield, that must be understood as metaphors. God is not a physical thing or a physical being.

2. **God is transcendent.** This means that he exists beyond the limitations of his created world. He is not part of it (even if he can be found everywhere in it, see below and the following study):
 - a. God is **infinite and unlimited**. He is not confined in space. He transcends everything in his creation. He is everywhere. 1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:8; Jeremiah 23:24.
 - b. God is **eternal**. He is the everlasting God. He is without beginning or end. Psalm 9:7; Isaiah 44:6; 1 Timothy 1:17; Revelation 1:8.
 - c. God is **unchanging**. He is the One who never changes (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). When the Bible says that God repents or changes his mind (for example in Exodus 32:14), this does not refer to any real change in God but to a change in the human situation that God is dealing with. God's faithfulness endures forever (Psalm 117:2).

Reflections

1. God describes himself as a living and personal God. Reflect on these truths. Compare your spiritual life before you became a Christian believer with your spiritual life now in fellowship with this living and personal God. Praise and thank him for who he is, for what he has done for you, and for what he can do for you and your family in your present situation.
2. God is also transcendent, unlimited, and unchanging. God is truly a great God! Spend some time considering God's greatness. Thank him for who he is, for his greatness.

[Go to Table of contents](#)

Study 3: How wonderful is our God!

Introduction and brainstorming

Introduction (teacher)

In the previous study we saw that the Bible describes God as a living, personal, and transcendent God. In this study we will see how the Bible describes God's moral character and his perfection. Discuss these questions in your groups:

- How would you describe God's moral character?
- What do you see as "God's perfections" (or "unlimitations") as compared with the limitations of man?

Brainstorming (students in groups)

Students discuss these questions freely without taking down notes. No need for any detailed feedback!

Bible references

In your groups, read the handout Bible references in two different translations and decide together what each reference tells us about how to understand God. Briefly note down your conclusions next to each reference, but avoid copying the whole Bible text. [Below I have included my own notes. They are for the teacher, not for the students!] [Note that the order in the students' list of references differs from yours!]

- Genesis 18:14 (The Lord informed Abraham that nothing is too hard for him)
- Exodus 34:6 (The Lord is merciful and gracious)
- Deuteronomy 7:7–8 (God loved Israel not because they deserved it)
- Job 37:16 (God informed Job that his knowledge is perfect)
- Psalm 11:7 (David experienced the righteous Lord, who loves justice and can be approached by upright people)
- Psalm 100:5 (The Lord is good and his love endures forever)
- Psalm 97:2 (Righteousness and justice are the foundation of the Lord's throne)
- Psalm 139:7–12 (David cannot escape from God. He is everywhere)
- Psalm 146:6 (The Lord remains faithful forever)
- Psalm 148:13 (God's glory is above the earth and the heavens)
- Isaiah 43:3 (The Lord says that he is the Holy One of Israel)
- Isaiah 66:1 (God is present in the whole of the created universe)

- Isaiah 65:16 (The God of truth)
- Jeremiah 32:17 (Nothing is impossible for the Sovereign Lord who made the heavens and the earth)
- Zechariah 8:6 (What seems impossible for the remnant of Israel is not impossible for the Lord Almighty)
- Luke 1:37 (The angel to Mary: For God nothing is impossible)
- John 3:16 (God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son for its salvation)
- Acts 17:27–28 (God is not far away from anyone of us; we actually have our being in him)
- 1 Corinthians 2:7 (God’s mysterious wisdom can be seen in the history of redemption)
- 1 John 5:20 (God is true)
- 1 John 3:20 (God is greater than our hearts. He knows everything)
- 1 John 4:8 (God is love)
- Revelation 4:8 (The four living creatures proclaim that the Lord God Almighty is holy, holy, holy)
- Revelation chapter 4 (John’s vision of the heavenly throne)

Conclusions

1. **God’s moral character :**

- a. He is the God of **holiness**. The Lord is the awesome and holy God who cannot be casually approached by sinful man. So God’s people are to be a pure and holy people. God’s holiness is expressed in his righteousness and justice. Isaiah 43:3; Revelation 4:8; Psalm 11:7; Psalm 97:2.
- b. **Love** is the very essence of God’s nature. This does not mean that “love is god” but that God is the God of love. This divine love is supremely seen in Jesus Christ. God’s love is different from human love. God’s love is unselfish and good, eternal, sacrificial, unfathomable, gracious and merciful, steadfast and faithful. 1 John 4:8; Deuteronomy 7:7–8; John 3:16; Exodus 34:6; Psalm 100:5.
- c. He is the God of **truth**. He is the only true God. He is completely dependable, upright and faithful. Isaiah 65:16; Psalm 146:6; 1 John 5:20.

2. **God’s perfections** (his “unlimitations”):

- a. He is all-powerful (**omnipotent**). Nothing is too hard for him. He is in control of his creation and of man. Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17; Zechariah 8:6; Luke 1:37.
 - b. He is all-knowing (**omniscient**). His knowledge is universal and timeless. His omniscience is seen in his wisdom. 1 John 3:20; Job 37:16; 1 Corinthians 2:7.
 - c. He is present everywhere (**omnipresent**) and to every person. But this does *not* mean that God can be identified with the universe, or that the universe is a manifestation of God. Such a belief is called *pantheism* and is a false understanding of God. Isaiah 66:1; Psalm 139:7–12; Acts 17:27–28
 - d. In the previous study we saw that God describes himself as **transcendent** (infinite/unlimited, eternal, and unchanging). This is also an aspect of God's "unlimitation".
3. **God is a God of glory.** This divine glory is the radiant splendor and awe-inspiring majesty of God himself. Psalm 148:13; Revelation chapter 4.

Reflections

1. Our God is both holy and loving. He is also faithful and truthful. Reflect on these truths in the light of your own life.
 - a. How will they help you face the challenges of your life?
 - b. How will they guide you in your endeavors to become a more Christlike person?
2. Our God knows everything and is present everywhere. Reflect on these truths in the light of your own life.
 - a. Do you find them frightening and threatening? Why? Are there things in your life that you try to hide from God, or perhaps even from yourself? Are there things that you are ashamed of? Bring all these things to God in prayer and ask him to forgive you and sanctify you. God's love and faithfulness endure forever.
 - b. Or do you find these truths comforting. Thank God that he is always with you. He strengthens you. He comforts you. He blesses you.

[Go to Table of contents](#)

Study 4: How mysterious is our God!

Introduction and brainstorming

Introduction (teacher)

In the previous two studies we looked at how God is described in the Bible. He is a living, personal, and transcendent God. He is a God who is holy, righteous, and just. He is also a God whose love is unselfish and good, eternal, sacrificial, unfathomable, gracious and merciful, steadfast and faithful.

In this study we will look at a central mystery of Christian theology – the doctrine of the Trinity, or the doctrine of the Triune God. Our God is a “three-in-one” God. He is one God in three persons. Discuss these questions in your groups:

- How do you understand God as “one God in three persons”? Who is the “One God”? And who are “the three persons”?
- What explanations of the Trinity (“one God in three persons”) have you come across?

Brainstorming (students in groups)

Students discuss these questions freely without taking down notes. No need for any detailed feedback!

Bible references

In your groups, read the handout Bible references in two different translations and decide together what each reference tells us about “one God in three persons.”

Briefly note down your conclusions next to each reference, but avoid copying the whole Bible text. [Below I have included my own notes. They are for the teacher, not for the students!] [Note that the order in the students’ list of references differs from yours!]

- Deuteronomy 6:4 (The Jewish declaration of faith: The Lord our God is one Lord)
- Psalm 2:7, quoted in Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5 (The Lord said to me, You are my son. Today I have begotten you.)
- Isaiah 11:2 (The Spirit of the Lord will rest on [the Messiah])
- Isaiah 45:5–6 (I am the Lord, besides me there is no god)
- Isaiah 64:8 (O Lord, you are our Father)
- Matthew 6:9 (Our Father who is in heaven)

- Matt 28:19 (Jesus commissions his disciples to make disciples and to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit)
- Mark 1:10–11 (After Jesus is baptized, the Spirit descends on him, and God’s voice from heaven confirms that Jesus is [the Father’s] beloved Son)
- Mark 12:29 (Jesus confirms Deuteronomy 6:4)
- John 1:1, 14, 18 (The Word was God, became flesh, we have seen his glory as of the only Son from the Father; the only begotten Son)
- John 14:26; 15:26 (The Father will send the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, in Jesus’ name to teach and remind the disciples, and to witness about Jesus)
- John 17:3 (Jesus calls the Father “the only true God”)
- Acts 5:3–4 (Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, so he lied to God)
- Acts 13:2 (The Holy tells the church in Antioch to separate Barnabas and Saul for him for a special ministry)
- Romans 8:26–27 (The Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, searches our hearts, and intercedes for us)
- Romans 9:5 (Christ is over all, God blessed forever)
- 1 Corinthians 8:6 (There is one God the Father)
- 2 Corinthians 13:14 (Paul’s blessing: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit)
- Ephesians 4:6 (One God and Father of us all)
- Ephesians 4:30 (The Holy Spirit of God, can be grieved)
- 1 Timothy 1:17 (The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God)
- Titus 2:13 (The glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ)

Conclusions

[Note to the teacher: The theology of “one God in three persons” is impossible for us to fully understand and consequently for Bible teachers to fully explain! Perhaps points 1, 2 and 4 below is enough for your students.]

1. **One God.** The Christian faith affirms that there is only one God. There is no doubt or hesitancy about this fact. The Bible strongly condemns polytheism (which means faith in and worship of many gods). Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5–6; Mark 12:29; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 1:17. Christian faith is unquestionably monotheistic. It believes in only one God.

2. **In three persons.** The Bible progressively reveals that the One God eternally exists in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This truth is only hinted at in the Old Testament (for example in Isaiah 48:16 and 61:1, where the Lord God, his Spirit, and the Messiah are mentioned together). But it becomes clear in the New Testament.
 - a. Each person is a person. They all have personal characteristics. Not only the Father and the Son (Mark 1:10–11; Matthew 28:19), but the Holy Spirit is also a person (John 14:26; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Acts 13:2).
 - b. Each person is God. Not only the Father is God (Isaiah 64:8; Matthew 6:9). But also the Son is God (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5; John 1:1, 14, 18; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13). And the Holy Spirit is God (Isaiah 11:2; John 15:26; Ephesians 4:30; Acts 5:3–4).
3. **One God in three persons.** This statement is a mystery that the human mind cannot grasp. We can never fully explain the mystery of the Trinity. But our Christian faith declares two fundamental truths about God:
 - a. **All the persons of the Godhead are God.** This means that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. We believe in one divine being, one divine reality, one God. We do not believe in three Gods. The Father is the one and only God. The Son is the one and only God. The Holy Spirit is the one and only God. The Father is totally God. The Son is totally God. The Holy Spirit is totally God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of the same essence. They are one substance. Their being is the same. They are identical in being. Each one of the three persons includes the whole of the Godhead. Each one of the three persons is the one undivided God. The close and intense love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit divinely binds them together into one God.
 - b. **The persons of the Godhead are distinct.** This means that the Father is not the Son, that the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit is not the Father. The Father is a distinct person. The Son is a distinct person. The Holy Spirit is a distinct person. These three persons exist distinctly from eternity to eternity. We do not believe that the One God calls himself by three names (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) depending on the situation. Nor do we believe that the One God plays three different parts, like an actor has different roles in a drama: God is not sometimes acting as “Father”, and at other times acting as “Son” or as “Holy Spirit”. We believe in three permanent distinctions (not divisions) within the One God. Both the “threeness” of God and the “oneness” of God are present in the Godhead at the same time and all the time. The “distinctions” within God can be seen in the language of the New Testament: The Father “begets” the Son

(Jesus Christ is the “one and only Son” of the Father, John 1:18; 3:16, 18; Psalm 2:7, quoted in Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5), and the Holy Spirit “proceeds” from the Father (John 15:26). These “distinctions” are mysteries beyond human understanding. The Bible also describes “distinctions” in the ways the One God acts: The Father acts by creation: he is the source of everything that is created. The Son acts by incarnation: he became man while he was still God. The Holy Spirit acts by coming: he was sent by the Father through the Son to come upon people. The creation of the Father, the incarnation of the Son, and the coming of the Holy Spirit are all unique acts of one divine person: they are all the mighty acts of the one and only God.

4. **Our response to the doctrine of the Trinity** must not be endless intellectual efforts. We must not try to understand that which cannot be understood. And we must not try to explain that which is cannot be explained. Our response should be one of wonder and amazement, worship and praise. We are called to worship and glorify this Triune God, who is infinite, eternal, holy, loving, omnipotent and omniscient.

Reflections

1. Spend some time reflecting on the mystery of the Trinity. Do not try to understand this mystery with your mind. But try to experience it. Try to enter into the fellowship of the One God who for you is God Father the Almighty, the Son Jesus Christ your Savior, and the Holy Spirit your Comforter and God’s power in your Christian life.
2. Almost five hundred years ago there was a saintly man in Russia. His name was Andrei Rublev, and he was known for his beautiful paintings of icons, pictures used in the Russian Orthodox Church for meditation. His most famous icon shows three angels sharing a meal around a square table (illustrating Genesis 18:1–8). These angels can be seen as representing the Trinity. The fourth side of the table is empty, inviting the viewer to share a fellowship meal with the Holy Trinity. Reflect on this invitation.

[Go to Table of contents](#)

God the Father

Study 5: Our Father in heaven!

Introduction and brainstorming

Teacher

In earlier studies we looked at different ways to describe God.

- What words come to your mind as you try to describe God? How is God?

Brainstorming (this time with the whole class)

[The students may come up with descriptive words like these: (God is) eternal, invisible, all-knowing, all-wise, truthful, faithful, good, loving, gracious, merciful, patient, holy, righteous, just, all-powerful, omnipresent, perfect, glorious.] [Don't write anything down!]

Teacher

In the previous study we saw that God is a Triune God, One God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- What does this tell us about how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit can be described? How is the Father? How is the Son? How is the Holy Spirit?

Brainstorming (again with the whole class)

[Answer: The words we used to describe God could also be used to describe each person in the Trinity.] [Don't write anything down!]

Teacher

Consequently, it becomes difficult for us to describe the Father without using words that could just as well describe the whole Trinity. This difficulty is particularly obvious when we study of the Old Testament, where God reveals less of himself. You may remember from our first study that God's revelation is progressive. This means that we get a clearer understanding of the Trinity (and a clearer picture of the Father) in the New Testament, where we read about the incarnation of the Son and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon God's people.

Here we will choose to limit of our description of the Father to only a few aspects.

Bible references

In your groups, read the handout Bible references in two different translations and decide together what each reference tells us about how to describe God the Father. Briefly note down your conclusions next to each reference, but avoid copying the whole Bible text. [Below I have included my own notes. They are for the teacher,

not for the students!'] [Note that the order in the students' list of references differs from yours!]

- Genesis 1:1, 27, 31; 2:4 (God created heaven and earth, and all living creatures, including man. And it was all very good)
- Exodus 6:6 (The Lord told Moses to tell the Israelites: I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with might acts of judgment)
- Deuteronomy 32:6 (To Israel: Your father created you, made you and established you)
- Psalm 9:7–8 (The Lord rules with justice and he judges the nations)
- Psalm 22:28 (Dominion belongs to the Lord, he rules over the nations)
- Psalm 50:4 (The Lord is the judge of his people)
- Psalm 89:18 (The Holy One of Israel is King of his people)
- Psalm 145:13 (The Lord's kingdom is everlasting and his dominion enduring)
- Isaiah 33:22 (The Lord is our judge, our lawgiver, our king, who will save us)
- Isaiah 54:5 (The Lord Almighty the Holy One of Israel is the Maker and Redeemer of his people)
- Isaiah 63:16 (You are our Father, our Redeemer from everlasting is your name)
- Isaiah 64:8 (You are our Father. We are the clay, and you our potter. We are the work of your hand)
- Isaiah 65:17 (God will create new heavens and a new earth)
- Jeremiah 15:20 (The Lord rescues and saves his people)
- Luke 1:68 (The Lord, the God of Israel has come and has redeemed his people)
- John 1:12 (Those who receive Jesus become the children of God)
- Romans 8:2 (God is the Redeemer of his creation)
- Romans 8:16 (Christian believers are God's children)
- Romans 14:10 (we will all stand before God's judgment seat)
- James 4:12 (There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and destroy)
- Revelation 14:7 The hour of God's judgment has come)
- Revelation 21:1, 5 (John saw a new heaven and a new earth. God, said, I am making all things new)

- 1 Timothy 1:17 (God is King eternal)
- 1 John 5:19 (We are the children of God and not controlled by the evil one)

Conclusions

1. The term **Father** is used a few times about God in the Old Testament (for example in Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 63:16). The Israelites are God's people, they belong to him, so they are his children (Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 64:8). In the New Testament we find that those who have received Jesus Christ are the children of God (John 1:12; Romans 8:16; 1 John 5:19).
2. God is the **Creator** of everything, also of man (Genesis 1:1, 27, 31; 2:4). God has promised to create new heavens and a new earth and to restore everything that was ruined by the Fall (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1, 5).
3. God is **Ruler and King**
 - a. He is Ruler and King of his creation (Psalm 145:13; 1 Timothy 1:17).
 - b. He is Ruler and King of the nations (Psalm 9:7–8; 22:28).
 - c. He is Ruler and King of his people (Psalm 89:18).
4. God is the **Redeemer and Savior**:
 - a. He is the Redeemer/Savior of his people (Exodus 6:6 ; Isaiah 54:5; 63:16; Jeremiah 15:20; Luke 1:68).
 - b. He is the Redeemer of his creation (Romans 8:22; Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1, 5).
5. God is the **Judge**
 - a. He is the Judge of kings and nations (Exodus 6:6 ; Psalm 9:7–8; Revelation 14:7).
 - b. He is the Judge of this people (Psalm 50:4; Isaiah 33:22; Romans 14:10, James 4:12).

[Go to Table of contents](#)

Study 6: Father, let your will be done!

Introduction and brainstorming

Teacher

In previous study we looked at some ways in which God the Father can be described.

- Which aspects of God the Father did we mention in the previous study?

Brainstorming (this time with the whole class)

[The answer is that God the Father is (among many other things, of course) Creator, Ruler/King, Redeemer/Savior, and Judge.] [Don't write anything down!]

Teacher

There are, of course, many more things that can be said about God the Father! But instead we will now go on to briefly look at three aspects of the work of God the Father:

1. Creation
2. Judgment
3. Redemption/Salvation and Restoration

Bible references

In your groups, read the handout Bible references in two different translations and decide together what each reference tells us about the work of God the Father in the three areas listed above. Briefly note down your conclusions next to each reference, but avoid copying the whole Bible text. [Below I have included my own notes. They are for the teacher, not for the students!] [Note that the order in the students' list of references differs from yours!]

- Genesis 1:1–31; 2:7 (God's good creation. Man created in God's own image, dominion over the created world. God breathed life into man)
- Genesis 3:11–13, 16–19–23 (The Fall, man's disobedience. Pain in childbirth, the man's dominance over the woman, hard work and death are consequences of the Fall, banishment from the Garden of Eden)
- Genesis 5:1–2 (God created man in the likeness of God, male and female)
- Genesis 6:11–12 (The earth was corrupt in God's sight because of man's sin)
- Genesis 12:1–3; 15:4–7, 18; 17:4–10 (God's promises to Abraham: a land, a son, numerous offspring even kings, to make him a great nation, to make him the father of a multitude of nations, to make him a blessing all the families of the

earth, everlasting covenant with his offspring, everlasting possession of Canaan. Circumcision was the obligation of God's covenant with Abraham)

- Exodus 19:5–8; 34:10 (God's people his treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Obedience to the Law was the obligation of God's covenant with the Israelites)
- 2 Samuel 7:12–16; 23:5 (God promises David an offspring and will establish his kingdom forever. God will be his father, and he will be God's son. God has made an everlasting covenant with David)
- Psalm 89:34–37 (God will keep his covenant with David forever)
- Psalm 96:10–13 (The Lord will judge the earth, and the nations of the world with righteousness and truth)
- Psalm 104:24–25 (God's manifold creation)
- Isaiah 7:3; 10:20–23 (The name of the prophets son, a remnant of Israel will return)
- Isaiah 65:17; 66:22 (God will create new heavens and a new earth, the former things will be forgotten)
- Jeremiah 31:7–8, 31–33 (God will save a remnant of Israel and make a new covenant with them which will transform their hearts); compare Luke 22.20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6
- Micah 4:6–7 (The Lord will assemble a remnant and make them a strong nation and rule over them in Mount Zion forever)
- Romans 1:20–25 (Man turned his back to God to worship idols and to lead sinful and immoral lives)
- Romans 3:22; 4:13 (Faith in Christ Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham and his offspring to inherit the world)
- Romans 5:12 (Sin entered into the world through the Fall, and with sin death)
- Romans 6:23 (The wages of sin is death)
- Romans 8:20–22 (All creation groans and labors in pain, waiting for liberation from decay)
- Galatians 3:16, 29 (Christ is Abraham's seed. We who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed and heirs)
- Ephesians 4:17–18 (The life of Gentiles: alienated fools with hardened hearts)
- 2 Peter 3:13 (God's people are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth)

- Revelation 21:1 (John is shown a new heaven and a new earth, a new creation)

Conclusions

1. Creation and the Fall:

- a. God created everything there is, heaven and earth, seen and unseen, all living creatures and all plant life (Psalm 104:24–25; Genesis 1:1–25, 31).
- b. God created man in his own image and breathed life into him. God gave man dominion over his created world. God created man, male and female, in his likeness (Genesis 1:26–30; 2:7; 5:1–2).
- c. God's creation was very good until the Fall (Genesis 1:31). The Fall was the consequence of man's sin (his disobedience). It disrupted the fellowship between God and man, and between man and woman. It brought pain, toil, and suffering to man. It brought decay and corruption and death into the world (Genesis 3:11–13, 16–19–23; Genesis 6:11–12; Romans 5:12; 1:20–25; Ephesians 4:17–18).

2. Judgment:

- a. God is holy, righteous and just. Consequently he cannot tolerate evil of any kind: pride, wickedness, sin, depravity, idolatry and so on.
- b. So God will judge the earth and the nations of the world (Psalm 96:1–13).

3. Redemption/Salvation and Restoration:

- a. God is merciful, gracious, compassionate, patient and loving. His holiness and righteousness make it necessary for him to judge and punish evil and unrighteousness of every kind. And his grace, compassion, and love make it necessary for him bring redemption and salvation to man's difficult situation under sin and death (Romans 6:23), and to bring restoration to God's creation suffering from the consequences of the Fall (Romans 8:20–22).
- b. God's **Old Testament covenants** of grace point forward to God's solution to the consequences of the Fall – the incarnation of God the Son and the coming of God the Holy Spirit.
 - God's covenant **with Abraham**. God promised Abraham, a son, numerous offspring even kings, a people, a land, and blessing to all nations. Genesis 12:1–3; 15:4–7, 18; 17:4–8; Romans 4:13; 3:22; Galatians 3:16, 29. Circumcision was the obligation of this covenant. Genesis 17:10.
 - God's covenant **with the people of Israel** (the Sinai Covenant, the "Old Covenant"). God promised to make his people his treasured

possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Obedience to the Law was the obligation of this covenant (Exodus 19:7–8). The “Old Covenant” was expressed through the tabernacle (through which God was present with his people) and the sacrificial system (through which the sin of the people was dealt with). The prophets later reveal that God’s people will be reduced to a “remnant” (Isaiah 7:3; 10:20–23; Jeremiah 31:7–8; Micah 4:6–7).

- **God’s covenant with David.** God made an everlasting covenant with David: He would give David an offspring who would be established on David’s throne forever. God would be his father, and he would be God’s son. His kingdom would last forever (2 Samuel 7:12–16; 23:5; Psalm 89:34–37). Jesus is referred to as the Son of David many times in the three first Gospels. Jesus is the Messiah, the king forever on David’s throne.
- **God’s promise of a New Covenant** (Jeremiah 31:31–33). God will transform the hearts of his people. The New Covenant is a covenant in the blood of Jesus (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25) and a covenant of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:6).
- **God’s promise of a new heaven and new earth** (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13). This will be the restoration God’s entire creation (Revelation 21:1).

We will study more about God’s redemption/salvation and restoration in the units **God the Son** and **God the Holy Spirit**.

Reflections

1. God is the Father of his created world. Reflect on this truth and praise God for his wonderful creation.
2. God is also your Creator and Father. Reflect on this truth and praise God that you are so wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14)

[Go to Table of contents](#)

God the Son

Study 7: God and Man

Introduction and brainstorming

Introduction (teacher)

Share in your groups some of the important things that you know about Jesus:

- What were the main events of his life?
- How would you describe his ministry?
- What names or titles did he himself and others use about him?

Brainstorming (students in groups)

Students discuss these questions freely without taking down notes. No need for any detailed feedback!

Bible references

In your groups, read the first group of the handout Bible references in two different translations and decide together what each reference tells us about Jesus' life and ministry. Briefly note down your conclusions next to each reference, but avoid copying the whole Bible text. Then do the same thing with the second group of Bible references which refer to names and titles used about Jesus and expressions that describe or explain his identity. [Below I have included my own notes. They are for the teacher, not for the students!] [Note that the order in the students' list of references differs from yours!]

Jesus' life and ministry

- Matthew 1:18–25; 4:23; 7:28; 9:35; 12:15; 28:18–20
- Mark 1:39; 3:14; 6:3, 56; 7:31; 8:31; 10:16; 15:26, 37, 43–46; 16:5–6
- Luke 1:26–38; 3:23; 4:16, 44; 8:1; 16:16; 24:50
- John 4:39; 6:66–68; 11:19; 18:20
- Acts 1:3, 9–11; 13:27–28

Jesus' identity (his names and titles)

- Matthew 1:23 (Immanuel)
- Matthew 9:27 (Son of David)
- Matthew 13:55 (The carpenter's son)

- Matthew 16:15–16 (The Messiah/Christ, the Son of the living God)
- Matthew 21:9 (Son of David)
- Mark 1:1 (Jesus Christ, the Son of God)
- Mark 2:10 (The Son of Man, forgive sins)
- Mark 2:28 (The Son of Man, lord of the sabbath)
- Mark 8:31 (The Son of Man, suffer, be rejected, killed, rise again)
- Mark 10:45 (The Son of Man came to serve)
- Mark 14:62 (The Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Mighty One, coming on the clouds of heaven)
- Luke 3:38 (Jesus' genealogy: "the son of God")
- Luke 19:10 (The Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost)
- John 1:1 (The Word was in the beginning, with God, was God)
- John 1:29 (The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world)
- John 1:41 (The Messiah, which means the Anointed One/the Christ)
- John 1:49 (The Son of God, the King of Israel)
- John 6:42 (The son of Joseph)
- John 6:46 (From God, has seen God)
- John 6:58 (The bread that came down from heaven, the one who eats will live forever)
- John 6:62 (The Son of Man ascending to where he was before)
- John 10:30 (The Father and I are one)
- John 12:23 (The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified)
- John 14:6 (I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me)
- John 19:7 (He ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God)
- John 20:28 (My Lord and my God)
- Romans 9:5 (The Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever)
- Romans 10:13 ("Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"
Joel 2:32)

- 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47 (The last Adam/the second man is from heaven, a life-giving spirit)
- 2 Corinthians 4:4 (Christ, who is the image of God)
- Colossians 1:15 (He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation)
- 1 Timothy 2:5 (Christ Jesus, the only mediator between God and men)
- Titus 2:13 (The glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ)
- Hebrews 1:3 (The reflection of God's glory and the exact representation of God's very being)
- Hebrews 1:8 (But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever")
- Hebrews 3:1 (Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession)
- 1 Peter 1:19 (The precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish)
- 2 Peter 1:1 (The righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ)
- 1 John 1:1 (The Word of life)
- 1 John 5:20 (His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life)
- Revelation 5:6, 12; 7:9–10, 14, 17; 12:11 (A Lamb looking as if it had been slain. Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered. A multitude standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb will be their shepherd and lead them to springs of living water. They have conquered the dragon in the blood of the Lamb)
- Revelation 19:13 (His name is called The Word of God)

Conclusions

1. **The main events of Jesus' life:** He was born in Bethlehem in Judea. Joseph was his legal father and his mother was Mary. His conception was miraculous (Luke 1:26–38; Matthew 1:18–25). He grew up in Nazareth in Galilee (Luke 4:16) and became a carpenter like his father (Mark 6:3). At the age of around thirty, he began his ministry (Luke 3:23) as a traveling religious preacher and teacher and a performer of spectacular miracles (Matthew 4:23), not only in his native Galilee but also in Samaria (John 4:39), in Judea (Luke 4:44), and in neighboring areas (Mark 7:31). Many people followed him (Matthew 12:15), particularly at the beginning (John 6:66–68). He appointed twelve

men, called apostles, to be his closest disciples (Mark 3:14). A few years later he was sentenced to death in Jerusalem by the Jewish Council and the Roman governor Pontius Pilate (Acts 13:27–28). He was crucified and died on the cross (Mark 15:26, 37). He was buried in a rock tomb (Mark 15:43–46), but rose from the dead after a couple of days (Mark 16:5–6). He spent a few more weeks with his disciples, teaching them and instructing them to go out and proclaim the good news about Jesus and the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3; Matthew 28:18–20). Then he was taken up to heaven (Luke 24:50), but angels told the disciples that he would come back in the same way (Acts 1:9–11).

2. **Jesus' ministry:**

- a. Proclaiming/preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 9:35; Luke 8:1; 16:16)
- b. Teaching, warning, comforting, and blessing (Matthew 7:28; John 18:20; Mark 8:15; John 11:19; Mark 10:16; Luke 24:50)
- c. Healing the sick (Mark 6:56)
- d. Delivering the demon possessed (Mark 1:39)

3. **Jesus identity:** Below are expressions and **names and titles** used about Jesus in the New Testament. They all have something to say about who he was and who he is. They all reveal something about his identity. In the next study we will look at further aspects of Jesus' identity focusing on him as Savior.

- a. Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph and Mary; the carpenter's son (Matthew 13:55; John 6:42). These, and similar expressions reveal **Jesus' identity as a human being**. He was born like any other human child. His daily life was just like the daily lives of most people who lived in Palestine during the first century AD. He became hungry and thirsty and tired and upset just like anybody else (Matthew 4:2; Mark 3:5; John 4:6; 19:28).
- b. **Messianic titles:**
 - Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Messiah*, meaning “the anointed (king),” John 1:41, 49. Christ is by far the most common title for Jesus in the New Testament. Messiah is only used in the two verses just mentioned.
 - The Son of Man was an expression originally meaning “person of male gender.” Later (based on Daniel 7:13–18) it was used a title for the Messiah. This is the most common title that Jesus uses about himself in the Gospels. He uses it with reference to his ministry on earth (Mark 2:10, authority to forgive sins; Mark 2:28, lord of the Sabbath; Luke

19:10, come to seek and save the lost). He uses it about his humiliation and suffering (Mark 8:31; 10:45). But he also uses it with reference to his exultation and glorification (John 6:62; 12:23; Mark 14:62). The Son of Man title **indicates Jesus' humanness**.

- The Son of David is used only a few times in the gospels (Matthew 9:27; 21:9). It shows that some people recognized Jesus as the messianic fulfillment God's covenant with king David. Nathanael even called Jesus "King of Israel" (John 1:49).
- The Son of God (Mark 1:1; John 1:49), a messianic title (from Psalm 2:2, 7 quoted about Jesus in Acts 13:33) which in the New Testament indicates a **claim to Jesus' divinity** (Matthew 16:15–16; John 19:7 compare John 10:33).
- c. The Lord (New Testament writers often apply Old Testament about The Lord God to the Lord Jesus Christ, for example Romans 10:13), the Word of God (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1 "the Word of life"; Revelation 19:13), God (John 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20), Immanuel (Matthew 1:23). These are titles that **identify Jesus as God**. There are also many other other expressions in the New Testament that indicate the divinity of Jesus, for example the "I am" statements in John's gospel (for example John 6:35, 41, 51; 8:32, 58; 9:35; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1; compare John 14:9, 11; and Exodus 3:14) and Jesus' claim that he came down from heaven (John 6:46, 51, 58, 62, compare John 1:14; 10:30). In the epistles, we find that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3).
- d. The Lamb of God. The full title is only found in John's gospel (John 1:29). In Revelation we find a shorter version "the Lamb" (Revelation 5:6, 12; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11). The **reference is to Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross** (compare Acts 8:32 quoting Isaiah 53:7; 1 Peter 1:19; also compare Hebrews where Jesus is referred to as high priest, 3:1, who sacrificed his own blood for the sins of the people, 9:25).
- e. **God and man:** Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of Man. He is both divine and human. He reveals to us the nature of **God**. He is God's face in this world. He is God the Son incarnated, the Son of God in human flesh, sent by God the Father into this world for our redemption/salvation (Galatians. 4:4–5; Hebrews 1:3). But Jesus was also **man** in a real sense. His disciples saw him with their eyes and touched him with their hands as he shared his life with them (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1). Jesus was not only any man, he also represented man ("Behold the Man", John 19:5) in accordance with God's original plan for mankind (the "son of Adam", Luke

3:38, was also “the last Adam”, 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47), perfect man, without sin (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5), so he could offer himself up as an unblemished sacrifice in order to save us from sin and death (Hebrews 9:14, 28; 1 Corinthians 5:7). Paul says that the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, is the only mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5–6). Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man in one person. He is not half God and half man. He is not God disguised as a man. He is not a man who somehow attained deity. He is fully God and fully man at the same time. This truth is, of course, a mystery far beyond our human understanding. But it is a truth that our salvation is built upon.

Reflections

1. The New Testament has many names and titles for Jesus. Which of them touches your heart in a special way? Explain why. Share and open your hearts to one another in your group.
2. Spend some time reflecting on the mystery of the incarnation. Do not try to understand this mystery with your mind. But praise God the Father for sending his Son to this world. And praise God the Son for his willingness to humble himself and become like one of us for our salvation. Also read Philippians 2:5–11. Reflect on this passage and share your thoughts and feelings with one another in your group.

[Go to Table of contents](#)

Study 8: Lord and Savior

Introduction and brainstorming

Introduction (teacher)

In the previous study we looked at Jesus' identity.

- What names and titles are used about Jesus in the New Testament do you remember?
- What do these names and titles tell us about Jesus – who he claimed to be, and whom people understood him to be?

Brainstorming (students in groups)

Students discuss these questions freely without taking down notes. No need for any detailed feedback!

Teacher

In this study we will look at six areas of Jesus' work:

1. Creation
2. Salvation
3. Judgment
4. Intercession
5. Rule/kingship
6. His return (our future hope)

Bible references

Students in groups

Read the six groups of the handout Bible references in two different translations and decide together what each reference tells us about Jesus' work in this particular area. Briefly note down your conclusions next to each reference, but avoid copying the whole Bible text. Cover one group at a time.

[Below I have included my own notes. They are for the teacher, not for the students!] [Note that the order in the students' list of references differs from yours!]

1. Jesus Christ and Creation:

- John 1:3 (All things came into being through the Word, who was God, and who became flesh in Jesus)

- 1 Corinthians 8:6 (Jesus Christ is the one Lord through whom all things are and through whom we exist)
- Colossians 1:16 (Everything in heaven and on earth were created through the Father's beloved Son and for him)

2. Jesus Christ and Salvation

- Matthew 1:21 (The angel told Mary to give him the name Jesus, because he would save his people from their sins); 5:17 (Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets); 26:28 (Jesus' blood was poured out for the forgiveness of sins); 27:50–51 (The curtain in the temple was torn when Jesus died)
- Mark 10:45 (Christ came to give us life as a ransom for many)
- John 1:29 (Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world); 3:16–17 (For God so loved the world ... those who believe in him will have eternal life); 4:42 (We know that this man really is the Savior of the world); 6:51 (Jesus gave his life for the life of the world; the one who eats of this "living bread from heaven" will live forever); 12: 47 (For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it)
- Acts 20:28 (The church was bought with the blood of God's own Son)
- Romans 3:25 (God presented Christ Jesus as an atoning sacrifice); 5:10 (We were God's enemies, but we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son. We have now received reconciliation); 5:8 (While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us); 8:3–4 (The law was powerless and weakened by man's sinful nature. So God sent his own Son as a sin offering to fulfill the just requirements of the law); 10:4 (Christ is the fulfillment of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes)
- 1 Corinthians 15:54–57 (The sting of death is sin. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ)
- 2 Corinthians 5:18–19 (God reconciled us to himself through Christ. He was reconciling the worlds to himself in Christ)
- Galatians 3:13 (Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us)
- Ephesians 1:7 (Through the blood of Christ we have redemption and forgiveness of sins); 5:2 (Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God)
- Colossians 1:20–22 (God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself through Christ. We were God's enemies, but now he has reconciled us by

Christ suffering death in his physical body); 2:13–14 (God forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record against us with its legal demands, nailing it to the cross)

- 1 Timothy 1:15 (Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners)
- Titus 2:14 (Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity)
- Hebrews 9:15 (Christ died as a ransom and free us from the sins of the Old Covenant); 10:10 (We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all)
- 1 Peter 1:18–19 (We were redeemed with the precious blood Christ, a lamb without defect or blemish)
- 1 John 2:2 (Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins); 3:5 (He who himself had no sin came to take away our sins); 4:10 (God loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins), 14 (We have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world)

3. Jesus Christ and Judgment

- John 5:22 (The Father has given all judgment to the Son), 25–29 (The Father has given authority to the Son to execute judgment. Those who have done good will be resurrected to life, those who have done evil will be resurrected to condemnation)
- 2 Corinthians 5:10 (We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ)
- 2 Timothy 4:1, 8 (Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead. The Lord is the righteous judge, and we long for his appearing)

4. Jesus Christ and Intercession

- Romans 8:34 (Christ is at the right hand of God and makes intercession for us)
- Hebrews 7:25 (Jesus, our high priest, always lives to make intercession for those who have drawn near to God through him)
- 1 John 2:1 (If anyone sins we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ who is righteous)

5. Jesus Christ and Rule/Kingship

- Luke 1:32–33 (The Lord God will give Jesus the throne of David, and he will reign forever. There will be no end to his kingdom)

- Hebrews 1:8 (But of the Son God says (quoting Psalm 45:6), Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom)
- 2 Timothy 4:1 (Jesus Christ's appearing and kingdom)
- 2 Peter 1:11 (The eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ)
- Revelation 11:15 (The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah. He will rule forever and ever)
- Revelation 17:14 (The Lamb is the Lord of lords and the King of kings)
- Revelation 22:1, 3 (The throne of God and of the Lamb)

6. The Return of Jesus Christ (our future hope)

- 1 Timothy 1:1 (Christ Jesus our hope)
- Titus 2:13 (We wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ)
- 1 Peter 1:13 (Set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed)
- 1 John 3:2–3 (When he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope...)

Conclusions

1. **Jesus Christ and Creation:** In study 5, we saw that God the Father is the Creator. But the New Testament reveals that the whole Trinity was – and still is – involved in work of creation. John's gospel uses the title Word for God the Son. All things were created through God's Word who became flesh in Jesus (John 1:3). Paul confirms this truth and adds that we exist through Jesus Christ and that we were created for him (1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16).
2. **Jesus Christ and Salvation:** In studies 5 and 6, we saw that God the Father is the Savior and Redeemer of his people, but also of his creation. The way in which the Triune God works his salvation and redemption is described in great detail in the New Testament. God the Son became man in Jesus of Nazareth, whose very name proclaims that the Lord will save (Matthew 1:21). He is the Savior of the world (John 3:16–17; 4:42; 12:47; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 John 4:14). The New Testament texts use a variety of expressions to express different aspects of this salvation. Here we will look at three, partly overlapping, areas Christ's work of salvation:
 - a. **Restoration of man's fellowship with God:** The Fall of man disrupted man's fellowship with God and made him a stranger to God. Sinful man

could no longer have intimate fellowship with Holy God. Jesus restored this fellowship through his death on the cross. The curtain that separated the Most Holy Place (representing God's presence) from the Holy Place (where the priests representing God's people could enter) in the temple was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:50–51). The texts use words such as “reconciliation” and “atonement” to express this aspect of salvation (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18–19; Colossians 1:20–22), and it was achieved through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10)

- b. **Redemption (or ransom) of man from sin and death:** Sin and death were two consequences of the Fall of man. Humanity lives under the bondage of sin and faces a certain death. Jesus sacrificed his life on the cross so that man could be redeemed from sin and death (Mark 10:45; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:15). The price was the precious blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God (John 1:29; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18–19). And the result is forgiveness of sins and eternal life (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7; John 6:51). The return of Jesus Christ will bring final victory over sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:54–57).
 - c. **Fulfilling the requirements of Holy God:** The law of the Old Covenant was God’s way of regulating and protecting the life of his chosen people surrounded by sinful and idolatrous nations. But they did not attain the requirements of the law because of their sinful nature, so God the Father sent his Son as a sin offering to fulfill the law (Romans 5:8; 8:3–4; 10:4; Matthew 5:17). Christ, who himself had no sin, became a curse for us (1 John 3:5; Galatians 3:13), offering himself for us as a sacrifice to God, making us holy and acceptable to God (Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 10:10). All our sins were forgiven as the law and its accusations against us were nailed to Jesus’ cross (Colossians 2:13–14).
- 3. **Jesus Christ and Judgment:** In studies 5 and 6, we saw that God the Father is the Judge. But the New Testament reveals that the whole Trinity is involved in the divine work of judgment. In John’s gospel Jesus claims that the Father has given the authority to execute all judgment to him, the Son (John 5:22, 25–29). Paul teaches that we will all have to stand before Christ’s judgment seat (2 Corinthians 2:10), but this is something that we who believe in Christ should look forward to and long for because he is a righteous judge (2 Timothy 4:1, 8).
 - 4. **Jesus Christ and Intercession:** After his resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven to a position of power together with God the Father. Together with God the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26–27) he is now interceding for us who belong to him (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1).

5. **Jesus Christ and Rule/Kingship:** In study 5, we saw that God the Father is the Ruler of his creation, of kings and nations, and of his people. But the Bible reveals that this authority is shared by God the Son. They both sit on the divine throne in a way that our human minds cannot grasp (Revelation 22:1, 3; compare Ephesians 5:5 “the kingdom of Christ and of God”). Jesus’ kingdom will be the fulfillment of God’s promise to David, and his universal kingdom will last forever (Luke 1:32–33; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15). This kingdom will be established at the second coming of Jesus (2 Timothy 4:1), and it will be a kingdom of righteousness (Hebrews 1:8). Jesus Christ the Lamb that was slain is the Lord of lords and the King of kings (Revelation 17:14).
6. **Jesus Christ our future Hope:** The Kingdom of God was manifested in a new and dramatic way with the coming of Jesus and with his earthly ministry (Mark 1:14–15; Matthew 12:28). People were healed and delivered, and the good news was preached to the poor and oppressed. In spite of this, Jesus taught his disciples to pray to our Father in heaven, “Your kingdom come!” (Matthew 6:9–10). Before he left his disciples he told them to carry on his ministry by going into the whole world and preach the gospel of the kingdom to all the nations, until the end of this present age (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10; 16:15). The early church was obedient to the great commission: They went, they preached the good news – and they waited for fulfillment of their hope and the consummation of the Kingdom of God with the second coming (the “appearance” and the “revelation”) of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:1; Titus 2:13; 1 Peter 1:13; 1 John 3:2–3).

Reflections

1. God’s salvation through Jesus Christ is described (and explained) in various ways in the New Testament texts. Reflect on the three sub-headings found under point 2 above.
 - a. What kind of fellowship with God have you had since you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior?
 - b. What does it mean for you personally that God redeemed you from sin and death as you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior?
 - c. Jesus fulfilled the requirements of Holy God as he suffered an agonizing death on the cross. Explain your feelings about this truth! How do you respond to this truth?

Spend some time thanking and praising God the Father for sending his Son to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). Thank God for his great love for us sinners (Ephesians 2:1–6).

2. What is your attitude to Christ's return and his judgment? Is it something you fear? Or is it something you look forward to with joy and expectation? Reflect on your feelings in the light of Jesus Christ and his work of salvation. Bring any worries and concerns that you may have before the Lord in prayer and ask him to take care of them and replace them with genuine hope and expectation.

[Go to Table of contents](#)

God the Holy Spirit

Study 9: The Holy Spirit described

Introduction and brainstorming

Introduction (teacher)

In study 4, we saw that the God of our Christian faith must be understood as Triune. We believe in One God in Three Persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

We also saw that each person in the Trinity is personal. So God the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, but a person (John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 13:2; Ephesians 4:30), a divine person (John 15:26; Ephesians 4:30; Acts 5:3–4).

The distinctions between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are mysteries beyond our human understanding. The Bible describes it by the ways the One God acts: The Father acts by creation; he is the source of everything that is created. The Son acts by incarnation; he became man while he was still God. The Holy Spirit acts by coming; he was sent by the Father through the Son to come upon people.

The basic meaning of the Hebrew word *ruah*, the Old Testament word for “spirit,” is “wind” (for example in Psalm 103:16) or “breath” (Job 19:17). That is why some translators use the expression “a wind from God swept over the waters” in Genesis 1:2 instead of the more common translation “the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

In the same way, the New Testament Greek word *pneuma* carries a variety of meanings, for example “wind” (Hebrew 1:7), “breath” (2 Thessalonians 2:8), “ghost” (Luke 24:37), “inner life, spirit of man, inner self” (1 Corinthians 16:18), and “Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit” (Romans 8:16). In the Nicodemus story, Jesus uses the word **pneuma** for both the Holy Spirit and wind (John 3:5–7).

In this study, we will briefly look at how the Bible describes God the Holy Spirit. In the following study, we will focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christian believers. Discuss this question in your groups:

- How would **you** describe God the Holy Spirit?

Brainstorming (students in groups)

Students discuss this question freely without taking down notes. No need for any detailed feedback!

Bible references

In your groups, read the handout Bible references in two different translations and decide together what each reference tells us about how to understand God the Holy Spirit. Briefly note down your conclusions next to each reference, but avoid copying the whole Bible text. [Below I have included my own notes. They are for the teacher, not for the students!] [Note that the order in the students' list of references differs from yours!]

- Genesis 2:7 (God breathes the breath of life into the man formed from dust)
- Exodus 31:3 (God's Spirit gives wisdom and understanding and skills for all kinds of workmanship)
- Judges 14:6 (The Spirit of the Lord gave Samson physical power)
- 1 Samuel 16:13–14 (God's Spirit came powerfully on David when he was anointed; but the Spirit left Saul)
- Psalm 104:30 (God's Spirit creates and renews)
- Ezekiel 11:5, 24 (The Spirit of the Lord gave the prophet a message and carried him away in a vision)
- Zechariah 7:12 (The Spirit of the Lord Almighty spoke through God's prophets)
- Matthew 10:20 (The Father's Spirit speaks through believers)
- Luke 2:25–27 (The Holy Spirit guided Simeon to the temple and revealed Jesus' identity to him); 3:21–22 (The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus after his baptism); 4:1 (The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert, where he was tempted)
- John 6:63 (The Spirit gives life); 14:26 (The Holy Spirit will teach believers all things and remind us of Jesus' words); 16:13 (The Spirit of truth will guide us into all the truth); 16:26 (The Holy Spirit will testify about Jesus)
- Acts 1:8 (The Holy Spirit gives believers power to witness); 8:29 (The Holy Spirit told Philip to approach the Ethiopian eunuch in the chariot); 11:28 (The prophet Agabus predicted a famine through the Spirit); 20:23 (The Holy Spirit warned Paul about future imprisonment and persecution)
- Romans 8:9 (God's Spirit lives in believers and makes them lead spiritual and righteous lives); 8:11 (God's Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. He will also give life to our mortal bodies); 8:14 (God's children are led by the Holy Spirit); 8:16 (The Spirit testifies that we are God's children); 8:26–27 (The Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, intercedes for us and helps us pray); 15:19 (The Holy Spirit gives power for signs and miracles)

- 1 Corinthians 2:10–14 (The Holy Spirit reveals. He helps us understand God's gifts and gives us spiritual wisdom)
- 2 Corinthians 1:22 ((The Holy Spirit as God's seal on us); 3:18 (Believers are transformed from glory to glory through the Lord, the Spirit); 13:14 (Believers have fellowship in the Holy Spirit)
- Galatians 5:16, 22–25 (Believers walk/live by the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit)
- Ephesians 3:5 (The Holy Spirit reveals things to apostles and prophets)
- Philippians 1:19 (The Spirit of Jesus Christ helps believers who pray)
- Colossians 1:8 (Believers receive love through the Holy Spirit)
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (God chose the believers in Thessalonica, saved them and sanctified them by the Spirit)
- 1 Peter 1:2 (Sanctified by the Spirit); 4:14 (The Spirit of God rests on God's people)
- 1 John 5:6 (The Holy Spirit of truth will testify about Jesus)
- Revelation 2:7 (The Holy Spirit speaks to churches)

Conclusions

Here is a list of how we can understand God the Holy Spirit as seen in various Bible texts. The list can be done differently. Many of the items are connected. In addition, some of the references mention more than one aspect of the Holy Spirit.

1. The Holy Spirit creates and gives life (Genesis 2:7; Psalm 104:30; John 6:63; Romans 8:11).
2. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God and his blessings in a person's life (1 Samuel 16:13–14; Luke 3:22).
3. The Holy Spirit guides, leads and helps those who belong to God (Luke 2:26–27; 4:1; John 16:13; Acts 8:29; Romans 8:14; Philippians 1:19; Romans 8:26–27).
4. The Holy Spirit teaches and equips God's people and gives us skills, understanding, and knowledge (Exodus 31:3; John 14:26). He gives words and grants visions to those who serve God (Zechariah 7:12; Ezekiel 11:5, 24; Matthew 10:20). He predicts and reveals. (Acts 11:28; 20:23; Ephesians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10–14; Revelation 2:7).
5. The Holy Spirit gives power to serve God (Judges 14:6; Acts 1:8; Romans 15:19).

6. The Holy Spirit sanctifies (Galatians 5:16, 22–25; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18 Romans 8:9).
7. The Holy Spirit gives love and fellowship to believers (Colossians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 13:14).
8. The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus and reminds us of him (John 14:26; 1 John 5:6).
9. The Holy Spirit testifies that we are God's children and that we belong to him (Romans 8:13–16; 1 Peter 4:14; 2 Corinthians 1:22).

Reflections

1. What aspects of God the Holy Spirit and his work (see the list above) have been particularly important for you personally? Share some of your thoughts with the others in your group.
2. What aspects of Go the Holy Spirit and his work (see the list above) have been particularly important for the development of your local church? Share some of your thoughts with the others in your group.

[Go to Table of contents](#)

Study 10: The Holy Spirit – “God in us”

Introduction and brainstorming

Introduction (teacher)

One of Jesus’ titles is Immanuel, which means “God with us.” One title that we could give the Holy Spirit is “God in us.” Paul defines Christian believers as people who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them. So those who do not have the Spirit of Christ are not Christian believers at all (Romans 8:9).

In the previous study, we looked at lots of Bible references that describe the Holy Spirit and his work. In this study, we will focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian believer and in the fellowship of believers, the church.

Discuss these questions in your groups:

- How would you summarize the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual believer?
- How would you summarize the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church?

Brainstorming (students in groups)

Students discuss these questions freely without taking down notes. No need for any detailed feedback!

Bible references

In your groups, read the handout Bible references in two different translations and decide together what each reference tells us about how to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer and in the life of the church. Briefly note down your conclusions next to each reference, but avoid copying the whole Bible text. [Below I have included my own notes. They are for the teacher, not for the students!] [Note that the order in the students’ list of references differs from yours!]

- John 3:3–6 (One must be born from above, be born of the Spirit, to enter the Kingdom of God)
- Acts 1:4-8 (Wait for the baptism with the Holy Spirit, then you will receive power to witness); 2:14–28 (Not drunk with wine, but filled with the outpouring of God’s Spirit); 6:10 (Stephen’s wisdom of the Spirit); 13:1–4 (The Holy Spirit directed the sending of Barnabas and Paul); 15:28 (The Holy Spirit was at work in the decision at Jerusalem); 16:6–10 (Paul and friends led by the Spirit)
- Romans 8:4–5 (The righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk according to the Spirit. We live in accordance with the Spirit); 8:9 (If

the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are in the Spirit. You have the Spirit of Christ); 8:9 (If the Spirit of God does not dwell in us, we do not belong to Christ); 15–17 (We have received a Spirit of sonship. The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God and joint heirs with Christ); 8:11 (God who raised Jesus from the dead, will also give life to our mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in us); 15:18–19 (Paul's powerful ministry was the result of the power of God's Spirit)

- 1 Corinthians 2:12–13 (Paul's ministry is through divine wisdom and understanding by the Holy Spirit); 3:16–17 (The church is God's holy temple, the dwelling place of God's Spirit); 6:19 (Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have received from God?); 12:3–27 (Those who have Jesus as Lord have the Holy Spirit with various spiritual gifts, manifestations of the Holy Spirit for the common good. Together they constitute the body of Christ)
- 2 Corinthians 3:6, 8 (The life-giving and glorious ministry of the Spirit); 13:14 (Paul's blessing on the church: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit)
- Galatians 4:5–6 (We call God our Father. We are his sons because he sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts); 5: 16–23 (To live by the Spirit means not to gratify the desires of the flesh. To be led by the Spirit bring the fruit of the Spirit into our lives)
- 1 Thessalonians 1:5 (Paul's gospel preaching was not only with words, but also in power and in Holy Spirit and with full conviction)
- Hebrews 2:3–4 (Salvation, first announced by the Lord, confirmed by those who heard him, and God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, distributing gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his will)
- 1 John 4:12–13 (God's love is perfected in us, and we know that we belong to him, because he has given us of his Spirit)

Conclusions

1. We can summarize the work of **the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual believer** in three points:
 - a. We are **born by the Spirit**. The Spirit's presence in our lives makes us children of God. We know God the Father because the Holy Spirit lives in us. (John 3:3–6; Romans 8:9, 15–17; Galatians 4:5–6; 1 John 4:12–13)
 - b. We are **empowered by the Spirit for the ministry**. Jesus was empowered by the Spirit as he began his ministry (Acts 10:38). When the Spirit comes

into our lives, he empowers us and equips us for service in the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:8; Romans 15:18–19; 1 Thessalonians 1:5).

- c. We are **sanctified by the Spirit**. Our bodies become a temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's presence in our lives makes us more like Jesus and helps us live lives that are pleasing to God our Father (1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:4–5; Galatians 5: 16–23).
2. Here we will limit our study of **the Holy Spirit and the Church** to two points:
 - a. **The Church is a fellowship of the Holy Spirit** (2 Corinthians 13:14). Those who received the gospel (and were born by the Spirit) were baptized to form a “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people” (1 Peter 2:9). They devoted themselves to the word of God (the apostles' teaching), the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers (Acts 2:41–42). Together they constitute the body of Christ, each member with spiritual gifts, manifestations of the Holy Spirit, for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:3–27). Together they are God's holy temple, the dwelling place of God's Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). They are united with Christ, encouraged by him and consoled by his love, having the fellowship of the Holy Spirit with tenderness and compassion, filled with unity, love, humility, unselfishness, having the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:1–5), God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, and patience (Colossians 3:12). They are the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2, 9), remembering what Jesus suffered on the cross for their salvation (Luke 22:19), rejoicing in the hope of the resurrection of the dead (Romans 8:11) at his second coming (Romans 5:2), and looking forward to celebrating with him and a multitude of people from the whole world the consummation of the Kingdom of God at the heavenly feast (Matthew 8:11; Mark 14:25).
 - b. **The ministry of the Church is carried out through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit**: Jesus told the apostles to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything that he had commanded them (Matthew 28:19–20). But they were not to leave Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit had come upon them with **power** (Acts 1:4–8). So the ministry of the Church, preaching the gospel of salvation in Jesus, started on the day of Pentecost, when thousands of people were saved as the result of Peter's spirit-inspired speech (Acts chapter 2). And the ministry of the Church continues throughout Acts and the remaining New Testament books (Romans 15:18–19; Hebrews 2:3–4). And it is still

carried on by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit We also see the **guidance** of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the early church (Acts 13:1–4; 15:28; 16:6–10; 2 Corinthians 3:6, 8), providing wisdom (Acts 6:10) and understanding (1 Corinthians 2:12–13).

Reflections

1. Reflect on your own life in the light of the three areas described in point 1 above. Perhaps the Holy Spirit leads you to share some of your concerns with a trusted friend or a trusted pastor. Ask them for guidance and request them to remember you in their prayers.
2. Reflect on the life of your local church in the light of point 2 b above. To what extent is the ministry of your church characterized by a powerful ministry carried out through the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit? Share in your groups. Pray together for any concerns that you may have.

[Go to Table of contents](#)

Statements of Faith

Creeds and statements of faith

In this booklet I have tried to cover what I think are the basic truths of Christian theology, truths that can be accepted by Christian believers from different denominational backgrounds.

The most central statement of faith in the New Testament is **Jesus Christ is Lord** (Philippians 2:11, compare 2 Corinthians 4:5; Acts 10:36).

Soon people felt that this simple statement did not cover enough issues. Questions like, “How can both the Father and the Son be God when God is One?” and “How can Jesus Christ be both God and man?” brought intense debate and even led to splits in the early church. So in order to decide what was correct theology and what was heresy, church councils were convened to formulate written creeds (statements of faith). The two most widespread creeds were the Apostles’ creed and the Nicene Creed. They were written in Latin and Greek in various versions and were later translated into many languages to be used in church liturgies.

Over the centuries, many statements of faith developed, very often in order to cover certain theological issues that defined a new Christian denomination. Many of these documents became long and included additional areas of theology, including church practices.

Below you will find the whole text of the **Apostles’ Creed** and the **Nicene Creed** (with questions) and an outline of the “**Fundamental truths**” of the Assemblies of God, perhaps the most widespread Pentecostal denomination in the world. I have also included a few questions.

This unit ends with an assignment for you to write your own confession of faith.

The Apostles’ Creed

This is the most commonly used version of the Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic (universal) church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting

Questions

1. How many parts does the Apostles' Creed contain?
2. Which is the most detailed part?
3. Which part is most "messy" in its contents?

Notes

A nearby CSI pastor or Roman Catholic priest may be able to provide you with an official Kannada version of the Apostles' Creed.

On [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) you can find readings in Kannada of the Apostles' Creed.

The Nicene Creed

This is one commonly used version of the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten from the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. On the third day he rose again, in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Questions

1. How many parts does the Nicene Creed contain?
2. It is longer than the Apostles' Creed. So what has been added?

Note

A nearby CSI pastor or Roman Catholic priest may be able to provide you with an official Kannada version of the Nicene Creed.

Assemblies of God “Fundamental Truths”

Most Pentecostal denominations do not have an official statement of faith, but will just say that their faith is based on the Bible. One exception is the Assemblies of God, an international Pentecostal denomination originating in the USA. Their list of “16 Fundamental Truths” is introduced like this:

This “Statement of Fundamental Truths” contains the 16 doctrines of the Assemblies of God. These are non-negotiable tenets of faith that all Assemblies of God churches adhere to. Four of these, Salvation, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Divine Healing, and the Second Coming of Christ are considered Cardinal Doctrines which are essential to the church’s core mission of reaching the world for Christ.

The Bible is our all-sufficient rule for faith and practice. This Statement of Fundamental Truths is intended simply as a basis of fellowship among us (i.e., that we all speak the same thing, 1 Corinthians 1:10 [KJV/NIV]; Acts 2:42 [KJV/NIV]). The phraseology employed in this Statement is not inspired nor contended for, but the truth set forth is held to be essential to a full-gospel ministry. No claim is made that it covers all Biblical truth, only that it covers our need as to these fundamental doctrines.

Questions

1. What does the text above say about the importance of these “fundamental truths” for Assemblies of God churches?
2. What does the text above say are the most important “truths” for the Assemblies of God?
3. What does the text above say that these “fundamental truths” are based on?
4. What does the text above say about other biblical truths?

Each fundamental truth contains a more or less detailed explanation followed by a few Bible references. The by far most detailed “truth” is 2 The One True God, which includes several sections. Here is a list of the 16 “fundamental truths”:

1. The Scriptures Inspired
2. The One True God
3. The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ
4. The Fall of Man
5. The Salvation of Man
6. The Ordinances of the Church
7. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

8. The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (referring to speaking in tongues)
9. Sanctification
10. The Church and Its Mission
11. The Ministry
12. Divine Healing
13. The Blessed Hope
14. The Millennial Reign of Christ
15. The Final Judgment
16. The New Heavens and the New Earth

Questions

1. Compare this list of 16 doctrines with the Apostles' Creed. Which doctrines are not found in the Apostles' Creed?
2. Do you have any additional comments about the "16 Fundamental Truths"?

Assignments (choose one)

1. Write your own "creed" or "statement of faith," without copying any of the documents above. This is a very challenging task, but it will be easier if you follow these suggestions:
 - Make it short.
 - Only include doctrines that most Christian believers will agree on whether or not they belong to a "full gospel" church.
 - Limit yourself to material found in this booklet.
 - Do not include any Bible references.

Compare your result with the work of the other members in your group.

2. Formulate your own "creed" or "statement of faith" as a prayer of thanksgiving to the Triune God. Your thanksgiving should be in three parts, one to God the Father, one to God the Son, and one to God the Holy Spirit. Make your prayer really personal and worshipful.

[Go to Table of contents](#)

Table of contents

Introducing Christian Theology	1
Instructions to the teacher	1
The Triune God	3
Study 1: God revealed	3
Study 2: How great is our God!	8
Study 3: How wonderful is our God!	11
Study 4: How mysterious is our God!	14
God the Father	18
Study 5: Our Father in heaven!	18
Study 6: Father, let your will be done!	21
God the Son	25
Study 7: God and Man	25
Study 8: Lord and Savior	31
God the Holy Spirit	38
Study 9: The Holy Spirit described	38
Study 10: The Holy Spirit – “God in us”	42
Statements of Faith	46
Table of contents	50